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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Happy Friday the 13th! I don't know whether or not any of you are superstitious, but today is the day to watch out for black cats, ladders, cracks in a sidewalk, and all of the other "bad omens" that we grew up to fear (or not!). Personally, I don't pay any attention to such bunk, but I did remember to pocket my lucky rabbit's foot this morning! ;^)

I don't consider myself a "super patriot", but I do consider myself fairly patriotic - at least within reason. However, something in the news lately have bothered me a little. Actually, a few things. There's a family in a local town nearby lost their son a few years ago in Afghanistan. The family donated a huge flag to the town, and it was being flown in the town square. Earlier in the week, the flag was found to have been stolen. For one thing, why would anyone steal a gigantic flag? And secondly, why a flag that was honoring a fallen son? Despicable. On a positive note, the flag appeared a few days later - probably after all of the publicity in the media. At least the thieves had a conscience after all.

The other flag "event" that also just happened was a gated community placed a ban on the American flag being displayed within the community because someone complained, complaining that they were offended by the sight of the flags being prominently displayed. Excuse me! What is offensive about people displaying an American flag on their own property? Fortunately, again, that ruling was quickly over-turned.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not a flag "fanatic", or however you want to state it. The flag is a symbol representing this country, and I believe in this country. Henceforth, I believe in the flag and what it represents. But, I grew up in the 60's. I grew up watching American flags being burned by anti-war protesters. I saw people wearing flags on their butts. I saw flags being used for all kinds of things and making all kinds of political statements.

I believe in the 1st Amendment - Freedom of speech. While I may not agree with the statements being made and using the flag to make them, I believe in someone's right to make them. I myself wore a large American flag patch on the back of an Army jacket belonging to a friend of mine who was killed in Viet Nam. That was my way of making a statement. I got all kinds of flak for having long hair and flaunting an American flag on my back. It was as if they were saying I had no right to wear the flag because I was a radical long-haired hippie. Ironical.

Until next time...

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Ouya: Can A \$99 Android-powered Gaming Console Topple Xbox?

Fans are fawning over an independent, open-source game system that's already attracted over \$4 million in funding on Kickstarter

An ambitious little Kickstarter project has ballooned into a multi-million dollar video game venture. Meet the Ouya, a \$99 Android-powered gaming console that could well turn the gaming industry on its head. Here's what you should know about the system, which has already raised more than a record \$4 million dollars for backers:

Traditional consoles like the Nintendo Wii, Xbox 360, and PlayStation 3 all cost between \$200 and \$300 and are all so-called "closed platforms," meaning you have to buy a \$60 game that's system-specific from a retailer. But the small, industrial-looking Ouya is open-source, meaning any independent developer can build games for it using Google's Android platform. Gamers simply hook the Ouya up their TV, download games online, and start playing with a real controller. "When I pitch people, the most common response is 'Huh. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense, I can't believe no one's done that,'" says Ouya founder Julie Uhrman. The goal is to have the Ouya in consumers' hands by March 2013.

The Ouya is especially appealing to people raised on the original Nintendo who don't have a spare 10 hours of leisure a week to justify the cost of a \$300 console, says Jared Newman at TIME, and so have taken to playing cheap games on their phones. Part of the Ouya's appeal is that all its games will have a free-to-play sampling element, "whether it's a brief demo or a full game replete with microtransactions." Not to mention it's "fully hackable," says Stephen Totillo at Kotaku, so enthusiasts can fool around with its innards to their heart's content. "This kind of openness is anathema to an outfit like Nintendo, that frowns on people even tinkering with their Wii to play a game not coded to run on [it]." We think the Ouya system will "disrupt the console market," Uhrman tells The Guardian. "It's inexpensive, all the games will be free to play, and it's open to any developer that wants to make a game for the TV."

As of Thursday morning, the project has attracted more than 31,100 backers

and has raised \$4,008,329, far exceeding its modest \$950,000 goal. It's evident that gamers "are craving something different," says Tim Stevens at Engadget, "and if the Ouya is a success, it could usher us into a new golden age of gaming."

Many gamers have "affectionate and well-established ties" to their existing consoles, says Nick Summers at The Next Web. But merely offering them a Call of Duty clone is "unlikely to budge them from the comforts of a familiar system." The other major problem is that many of the Ouya's games will already be playable on a phone or tablet. Consumers may be "unlikely to fork out on another console just to play the same game." Perhaps Ouya's biggest worry is waking slumbering giants like Google and Apple, says TIME's Newman. If the system's even a "modest hit," that might give the heavyweights the incentive to build their own comparable consoles.

"I don't think the Ouya signals the death of the established video game industry," says TIME's Newman. "I like big-budget games, and I hope the best ones find a way to survive even as the industry as a whole tumbles." But the timing could be right for Ouya to disrupt the market. "I think it will start as an indie/casual platform," analyst Michael Pachter tells Kotaku, but it'll need a solid user base in place before it can attract the creative talents of developers. "It's chicken and egg."

Tecmo Koei Accidentally Sells the Wrong Game in Japan

Whoops!

A funny story surfaced on Andriasang today chronicling an unfortunate mistake committed by Japanese publisher and developer Tecmo Koei.

Tecmo Koei is best-known for franchises like Monster Rancher, Ninja Gaiden, Dead or Alive, Dynasty Warriors, Fatal Frame, and Samurai Warriors. But it's two games that never saw the light of day outside of Japan (at least on the platform in question) Sangokushi VII and Sangokushi VIII that rest at the heart of this particular story. You may know "Sangokushi" best by its western name: Romance of the Three Kingdoms.

According to the report, Tecmo Koei released a budget version of Sangokushi VIII for PlayStation Portable yesterday in Japan. However, the UMD, once loaded on the PSP, was actually for the game's predecessor, Sangokushi VII.

This note is purportedly a confirmation from Tecmo Koei of the mistake.

The company has halted sales of the game, as a result, Andriasang reports, and is currently arranging a replacement program for current owners.

Could Microsoft or Time Warner Buy Activision?

A new rumor suggests that Vivendi is looking into Microsoft and Time Warner as possible buyers for its sale of Activision Blizzard. According to Reuters, multiple anonymous sources report that Vivendi has recruited a bank to discuss the potential purchase of Activision with multiple parties.

The sources indicate that Microsoft, Time Warner and Chinese company Tencent are among the companies Vivendi is looking to approach about the sale, in addition to private equity firms KKR, Providence and Blackstone. Vivendi is reportedly looking into cash-rich purchasers in an attempt to raise up to \$10 billion as it seeks to turn around its recent debt.

Rumors began swirling in June that Vivendi was looking to unload its 61% stake in Activision. Vivendi CEO Jean-Bernard Levy stepped down last month, and financial services agency Standard & Poor's recently placed Vivendi under negative credit watch due to uncertainty about the company's future plans.

Vivendi first acquired its stake in Activision Blizzard as the companies merged back in 2008. According to Reuters sources, the sale is nothing official yet, but bankers close to Vivendi have already begun sounding out the potential purchasers. Keep checking back to IGN for any updates as they become available.

Gigantic Video Game Collection Sold for \$1.2 Million

If you go to this interesting eBay page, you'll find something mind-blowing: an auction for thousands of videogames that was recently completed for about 1 million, the equivalent of about \$1.2 million.

As chronicled by the LA Times, the games for sale include 22 full sets, meaning that, for 22 different consoles, his collection contains each and every game released. Included are 1,050 Famicom games, 200 Famicom Disk System games, 1,500 Super Famicom games, 200 N64 games, 320 GameCube games and complete sets for every SEGA system ever released, including Master System, Genesis, Saturn and Dreamcast.

The eBay page contains pictures of the collection and the name of each and every game. Virtually all of the games sold are complete, meaning they have their boxes, instruction manuals and inserts. Many of the games are even factory sealed.

So, how jealous are you that a collection like this exists?

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

### Judge Steps Away from Facebook Privacy Lawsuit

A judge recused herself from overseeing a privacy lawsuit against Facebook over the social networking service's "Sponsored Stories" feature, one day before she was set to hold a hearing on a proposed settlement.

District Judge Lucy Koh in San Jose, California, federal court did not provide a reason for the recusal in a brief order on Wednesday.

Five Facebook members filed a lawsuit seeking class-action status against the social networking site, saying its "Sponsored Stories" feature violated California law by publicizing users' "likes" of certain advertisers without paying them or giving them a way to opt out. The case involved over 100 million potential class members.

As part of a proposed settlement, Facebook agreed to allow users more control over how their personal information is used. The value to Facebook members resulting from the changes is about \$103 million, in the opinion of one economist hired by the plaintiffs.

However, the amount Facebook will actually pay to settle the case is just over \$20 million, according to court documents filed last month.

Any settlement must be approved by a judge. In the order on Wednesday, Koh vacated all pending dates for motions in the case, and asked that it be reassigned to another judge.

Koh had overseen the lawsuit since it landed in federal court last year. In an order last December, Koh rejected Facebook's attempts to dismiss the case, saying plaintiffs had shown economic injury could occur through Facebook's use of their names, photographs and likenesses.

The case is Angel Fraley et al., individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated vs. Facebook Inc, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California, 11-cv-1726.

#### Symantec Anti-Virus Update Makes Some PCs Inoperable

A bug in an update of Symantec Corp's anti-virus software caused some Windows PCs to crash, making machines inoperable until they were serviced in an embarrassing episode that angered some customers.

The company disclosed the problem on its website, saying that an update to its widely used Symantec Endpoint Protection 12.1 anti-virus software for businesses caused some PCs running Windows XP software to crash repeatedly, showing what is known as the "blue screen of death."

The embarrassment comes at a challenging time for Symantec, whose shares have lost about a quarter of their value since it warned of a pending profit decline three months ago.

"Enterprise security has continued to be an uphill battle for Symantec," said Daniel Ives, an analyst with FBR Capital Markets. "There is increasing competition. The company historically has not been consistent around executing."

Customers reported it took Symantec hours to identify and fix the bug and that they needed to fix computers broken by the tainted update on their own.

Symantec's advisory said the company did not know what caused the problem, but that PCs could be fixed if customers manually removed the software from each disabled computer.

"Phoning Symantec support this morning was the start of the hell we went through," one customer said in a support forum on Symantec's website.

"The support is a joke, the quality control is a joke, and the software is not much better."

Customers complained on a Symantec user forum that the removal process was time consuming, although one said the software maker had offered compensation for the inconvenience.

That customer said on the support site that he emailed technical support to ask: "How is Symantec going to compensate customers for the hours of lost worker production and the time and effort taken by IT staffs to rectify this huge error by Symantec?"

He said a company representative called him 20 minutes later to say they were working on a compensation package.

"I encourage everyone to ask to be compensated for the time and effort it took all of us (to) fix Symantec's software," the customer said on the support site. (<http://bit.ly/LiH764>)

Symantec spokeswoman Ellen Hayes said she could not immediately discuss the terms of any compensation that might be in the works. She was also unable to say whether the update caused machines running Symantec's Norton anti virus software for consumers to malfunction.

A technology manager with Dutch company PSO Beheer BV told Reuters the bug caused some 150 PCs to fail. His company had to close a laboratory with equipment running on Windows XP machines and also sent some workers home so they could access their network remotely.

"It did have quite an impact on our business," said manager Ron van den Broek. "My first impression is Symantec is downplaying the effects of this issue."

A Maryland-based insurance company temporarily shut down anti-virus software for all its 150 PCs to prevent them from getting damaged, leaving them without protection, the company's technology manager told Reuters.

Hayes also said she could not immediately say how many PCs had crashed after receiving the update.

#### US Social Media Account in China Disappears

A widely read microblog written by the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai and known for its sometimes tongue-in-cheek comments about China's social and political issues was inaccessible Friday.

Sina Weibo, China's most popular microblog site that hosts the consulate's account, said it could be a technical glitch, an explanation the company has given in the past in cases where censorship was at work.

The Shanghai account had more than 80,000 followers before it became inaccessible Thursday. It has in the past touched on topics the government

considers sensitive.

On June 4, the 23rd anniversary of the student movement on Tiananmen Square in 1989, when online censorship kicked into high gear for the taboo topic, the Shanghai consulate's blog remarked that history could not be discussed that day. A day later, it said: "Yesterday is finally gone."

Also in June, when a Chinese newspaper called for response from the U.S. embassy after a senior environmental official criticized its popular Twitter feed that tracks pollution in smoggy Beijing, the Shanghai consulate posted a shushing emoticon. "Keep your voice low. People are still sleeping," read the posting. The comment later disappeared, though it was unclear why.

U.S. diplomats have boosted their public diplomacy through social media. The U.S. government has an active presence on Chinese social media sites; many U.S. officials in China have individual Weibo pages, and the embassy in Beijing and consulate departments update their own sites with remarks by American officials, press releases and videos.

Using platforms such as Sina Weibo lets diplomats directly engage the Chinese public without having to go through the state media, said David Bandurski, editor of the Hong Kong-based China Media Project website.

And the U.S. consulates in Shanghai and Hong Kong have stood out for their use of playful language filled with trendy online expressions by Chinese web users to chime in on hot social and political topics in China.

Attempts to access the Shanghai consulate's microblog on Sina Weibo Friday were met with an error message that said the account is "temporarily unavailable." The results for searches of the consulate's microblog name were censored with a message that said: "According to relevant laws, regulations and policies... search results were not displayed."

American officials said they did not know why their social media account could not be reached.

"We're still working to find out why our Weibo page is inaccessible," said Shanghai consulate spokeswoman Wylita Bell, reached by phone. "We are speaking with our commercial service provider, doing follow ups, trying to find out why. We also still hope that we can resume normal operations as soon as possible."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin said he had no information on the inaccessibility of the consulate's blog, adding China manages the Internet according to its laws and regulations.

A Sina Weibo employee in a department that oversees the microblog site's operations said there could be a technical glitch.

"We are not sure what happened exactly," said the woman, who refused to give her name.

Sina Weibo employs a team of censors to make sure the site is free of personal attacks, pornography, as well as any "illegal information," which covers topics the government wants to keep out of public discussions. Sina Weibo says it reserves the right to delete posts and freeze accounts for content it deems offensive.

Besides the usual differences with the United States over trade and



politics, this summer is also a sensitive time for Beijing.

The once-in-a-decade handover of power to the next generation of Chinese leaders is only months away, and media controls are likely to get tighter, said Doug Young, a Chinese media expert at Fudan University in Shanghai.

"There's certainly lots of reasons why China might decide to punish the consulate by blocking their Weibo," Young said.

The Sina Weibo accounts of other branches of the U.S. government in China, such as the embassy in Beijing and consulates in other cities including Hong Kong were still accessible Friday.

#### Social Site Formspring Hacked, Passwords Leaked

Social networking site Formspring said Tuesday that it was disabling nearly 30 million registered users' passwords after hundreds of thousands of them were leaked to the Web.

Formspring said in a blog post that the breach happened after someone hacked into one of the San Francisco-based company's servers.

Spokeswoman Dorothee Fisher said the company was alerted Monday that some 420,000 encrypted passwords had showed up on a security forum whose identity she refused to disclose because she did not want to draw attention to it. Encrypted passwords aren't immediately useable, although they can sometimes be decoded by a savvy attacker.

Fisher said that there was no evidence that any accounts had been tampered with.

Formspring founder Ade Olonoh said in a blog post that his company had fixed the vulnerability and upgraded its encryption, adding that the company wanted to "play it safe" and had asked all users to reset their passwords.

"We take this matter very seriously and continue to review our internal security policies and practices to help ensure that this never happens again," he said.

Formspring launched in 2009 as a crowd-powered question-and-answer site. Last month, the company announced a major revamp intended to shift the site's focus toward users' interests.

#### Belgian Official Quits After Anonymous Allegations

A Belgian local official provisionally quit the Flemish far-right political group Vlaams Belang on Wednesday after Internet hacking group Anonymous published his name on a list of alleged paedophiles.

Local councilor Hans-Peter Luyckx, who denies the claims, decided to temporarily resign from Vlaams Belang to avoid damage to the party.

"This does not imply any kind of admission," the party said Wednesday.

Anonymous this week launched a global operation targeting web users it said visit paedophile forums and chatrooms. It has published some 500 email addresses, IP details and sometimes postal addresses and phone numbers of those it claims were active on the sites.

Vlaams Belang recently launched a poster campaign calling for stiffer punishments for paedophiles.

The names of several Belgians and Dutch people appeared on the list, Belgian media said.

Luyckx, from the Evere commune near Brussels, denies any wrongdoing and says his web address was hacked. He plans to file a complaint in the case.

Belgian prosecutors are looking at the information provided by Anonymous, while also probing the activities of the international group of tech-savvy "hacktivists".

#### HTC Working On A Unique New Tablet

Like a lot of Android device vendors, HTC's efforts in the tablet market haven't gained much traction. But PC Advisor reports that HTC has decided to delay releasing any new tablets until it has something unique to offer in the already-crowded tablet market. The good news is that an HTC representative told PC Advisor that such a tablet is currently in the works, although the rep wouldn't offer any additional information on when it will be released or what unique features will set it apart from rivals such as the Apple iPad, Microsoft Surface and Google Nexus 7. At the same time, it's good to see an OEM at least purport to take its time to create something fresh rather than just cranking out another iPad or Kindle Fire clone.

#### Apple Pulls Out of Environmental Ratings Registry

Apple's withdrawal from an environmental ratings registry has prompted at least one city - San Francisco - to stop buying its computers.

The decision does not apply to iPads or iPhones. But Francis Tsang, spokesman for Mayor Edwin Lee's office, says the city's rules require that laptops, computers and monitors comply with the registry's requirements.

Late last month, Apple Inc. told the nonprofit EPEAT, short for Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool, to remove its products from its registry. It also plans to stop submitting its products to EPEAT for environmental ratings.

EPEAT is an industry standard that seeks to make it easier for customers to buy environmentally friendly electronics. Manufacturers still participating include Dell Inc., Hewlett-Packard, Lenovo, Samsung and Sony.

#### Apple Returns to Environmental Ratings List

Apple Inc. said Friday that it is putting its products back on an environmental ratings registry, saying it made a mistake in removing them from the list.

The Cupertino, Calif., company said all of its eligible products are back on the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool registry, and says it looks forward to working with EPEAT, the nonprofit organization that runs the registry.

Apple told EPEAT that it was withdrawing its products from the list on June 29, and said it did not plan to submit its products for ratings in the future.

The list is considered an industry standard and it helps customers buy electronics that are environmentally friendly. Some municipalities also use it to guide their decisions in buying electronics.

In a letter posted on Apple's website, Bob Mansfield, its senior vice president of hardware engineering, said the company "heard from many loyal Apple customers who were disappointed" the company had removed its products from the system.

"I recognize that this was a mistake," he wrote.

After Apple's previous announcement, the city of San Francisco said it would stop buying Apple computers.

#### Thunderbird: Stability and Community Innovation

Thunderbird provides an open-source, cross-platform email alternative for those of us who still use stand-alone email clients (and I am one). It's trust-worthy, it's under your control, and it's built to reflect the Mozilla mission. Once again we've been asking the question: is Thunderbird a likely source of innovation and of leadership in today's Internet life? Or is Thunderbird already pretty much what its users want and mostly needs some on-going maintenance?

Much of Mozilla's leadership—including that of the Thunderbird team—has come to the conclusion that on-going stability is the most important thing, and that continued innovation in Thunderbird is not a priority for Mozilla's product efforts. As a result, the Thunderbird team has developed a plan that provides both stability for Thunderbird's current state and allows the Thunderbird community to innovate if it chooses.

In this plan, Mozilla will provide security updates through an Extended Support Release process. We will also maintain mechanisms for the Thunderbird community to organize for ongoing development. Here are additional details about this plan. If you are a Thunderbird user and are interested in more details, please follow the discussion at the two URLs above or in the Thunderbird online channels. If you are a Thunderbird developer, join the discussion in the Thunderbird development forums.

Thunderbird is an important product for many people—I am one of them. If you're one of us and want to get involved in building Thunderbird, now is the time. For Thunderbird users, the Extended Support Release process

will provide security maintenance updates.

We've asked the question about Thunderbird and ongoing innovation a number of times. We've tried for years to build Thunderbird as a highly innovative offering, where it plays a role in moving modern Internet messaging to a more open, innovative space, and where there is a growing, more active contributor base. To date, we haven't achieved this. The exception to this statement is the Mozilla localization communities, which contribute immense effort into localizing Thunderbird into many languages. However, the dedicated efforts of these groups have not been supported by an active contributor base in other areas. This puts great stress on a number of our localization communities.

The Thunderbird team has successfully updated the product and has built infrastructure for innovation in Thunderbird. It has ideas and projects under way. It tries to develop and welcome and nurture new contributors. Over the years we've tried a variety of things to encourage community development and innovation in the Thunderbird world. In the early days of the Foundation in 2003 the same team was developing Firefox and Thunderbird; then we created Mozilla Messaging for a focused development; and today the Thunderbird team is back in the main Mozilla product organization.

Most Thunderbird users seem happy with the basic email feature set. In parallel, we have seen the rising popularity of Web-based forms of communications representing email alternatives to a desktop solution. Given this, focusing on stability for Thunderbird and driving innovation through other offerings seems a natural choice.

### Google Wants The World To "Legalize Love"

Correction: The "Legalize Love" campaign focuses less on legalizing gay marriage, and more on promoting safer working conditions for LGBT employees.

A Google spokesperson told dot429, "'Legalise Love' is a campaign to promote safer conditions for gay and lesbian people inside and outside the office."

The campaign officially launches in Poland and Singapore on Saturday, July 7th. Google intends to eventually expand the initiative to every country where the company has an office, and will focus on places with homophobic cultures, where anti-gay laws exist.

Google's Mark Palmer-Edgecumbe outlined the initiative at a Global LGBT Workplace Summit in London earlier today. "We want our employees who are gay or lesbian or transgender to have the same experience outside the office as they do in the office. It is obviously a very ambitious piece of work."

Their strategy involves developing partnerships between companies and organizations to support grass-roots campaigns.

On the decision to launch the initial phase in a country like Singapore, Palmer-Edgecumbe says, "Singapore wants to be a global financial center and world leader and we can push them on the fact that being a global center and a world leader means you have to treat all people the same, irrespective of their sexual orientation."

At the end of the day, the "Legalize Love" campaign is also good for Google's business. "We operate in many countries and have a very globally mobile workforce. We have had a number of instances where we have been trying to hire people into countries where there are these issues and have been unable to put the best person into a job in that country," said Palmer-Edgcombe.

Harry Gaskell, of professional services firm Ernst & Young who also spoke at the conference in London, backed the argument for combining initiatives between governments, organizations, and companies. "If you are trying to change something - governments can exert diplomatic power, NGOs can marshal facts and arguments - but corporations marshal economic power. That is something even the most passive of countries will listen to."

Bob Amnibale, an openly gay executive at Citi, also praised the initiative. "The fact that Google is so virtual and its appeal is very wide and young demographically means it can help spread messaging very, very quickly."

Google has had a long standing history of enacting fair policies to promote equal rights for their workers.

Back in 2010, Google began covering a cost that gay and lesbian employees must pay when their partners receive domestic partner health benefits, largely to compensate them for an extra tax that heterosexual married couples do not pay.

The company has also signed various referendums in the past, and have actively sponsored Pride celebrations around the world.

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